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Souvenir history of St.
Matthew's parish, Moravia,

Souvenir History

OF

ST. MATTHEW'S PARISH

Moreavia, New York

WILLIAM SLIPERLAND STEVENS, M. A.
RECTOR

1910



Foreword

To all who make up the Moravia of this day, the Parish of your forefathers sends its most sincere greetings. To many of you the history of the early days and doings are of necessity unknown, and it is because of this, and also on account of the interesting facts that are a part and parcel of the history of St. Matthew's Parish, that this book is now put forth. The chief value, perhaps, of history lies in its ability to inspire the present to greater and better deeds in the future by its recital of the doings, the devotion, and the daring of the men of former days. If this be true, then it is well worth the time to study carefully the history of this Parish, for contained therein are records the mere recital of which ought to and must inspire the men of Moravia in this day to greater doing and better living. And anything that will be of service in making the life of this fair village still better and more in accord with that which it ought to be is well worth the effort. Therefore with no apologies for the motive that prompts this publication, but craving your kindly indulgence for its many imperfections, we leave with you, our townspeople, this Souvenir History of Saint Matthew's Parish, of Moravia, New York.

ADDENDUM.

The name of the Reverend Harry Briggs Heald is to be added to the list of clergymen who have been Ordained from this Parish, thus making fourteen instead of thirteen as noted.

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This book is to be sold for the benefit of St. Matthew's Hospital.

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History of St. Matthew's Parish



It is not a little interesting to trace things to their origin. Institutions frequently take their rise in circumstances which, beforehand, seem of a nature to produce almost any other result than the one which at last actually appears. Incidents in the life of very humble individuals are so connected with the great system of Divine Providence as finally issue in events which, desirable as they were unexpected, furnish occasion for devout admiration to succeeding generations.

The origin of an humble Church in a country village, although of little interest to the great world, is, however, a matter of much interest to its own members; and their gratitude, at least, demands that the efforts of its founder be had in remembrance. The origin and progress of The Church in Moravia are chiefly to be ascribed, under God, to the unassuming but firm and judicious exertions of Mr. Dudley Loomis. His worthy parents, formerly residing in Otsego County, were attached to the communion of the Presbyterian Society, and their son was educated in all the strictness of the principles of that denomination. The reflection, however, of a riper age led him to relinquish his faith in the tenets of Calvinism. In the year 1809 he removed to Fairfield, Herkimer County, and thence, in 1812, to Burlington, in Otsego. During his residence at the latter place he was led to examine the great points in question between Churchmen and Presbyterians. He perused Dr. Miller's letters on that subject, and desiring to read the answer of Dr. Bowden, he was furnished with it by the Reverend Daniel Nash; and after a candid examination of both sides of the question, his judgment was satisfied with the evidence which led him contrary to the bias of early education, and his convictions of the truth of the Church's claims to Apostolic Institution are dated from that period.

In the year 1816 he came, with his family, and in the autumn of his age, to the quiet village of Moravia. Although a man of laborious industry and unblemished integrity, he had, twice in his life, been sorely tried by the loss of nearly all earthly property; but the virtues which did not save him from calamity yet gained for him that which is "better than precious ointment," A GOOD NAME. In a few years the blessings of the Most High brought him to the enjoyment of a competency, and he had little to wish for except the privilege of public worship in the Communion of The Church, whose forms of devotion so naturally draw after them the affections of an ardent, yet *sober* and *intelligent*, piety. Long and anxiously did he reflect upon the project of organizing a Church. There was not, in the Village, one family that could be called Churchmen, and only two or three Communicants in the neighborhood. The case seemed

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to be almost without hope; and yet the general state of things demanded an effort. During the six years of his residence at Moravia Mr. Loomis had observed several things which favored the belief that the Doctrines and Worship of The Church would find a favourable reception if they coul^d be *fairly* submitted to the examination of the people. The Calvinistic doctrines of the Congregational Society had been from the first strongly and constantly proclaimed by its ministers, and warmly avowed by the leading members. It was clear, in the case of many, that the light in which these doctrines were presented had made them unwilling to connect themselves with the society, and too often caused a neglect of that *attention* to religious things which must always precede a state of confirmed piety. The occurrence of somewhat frequent dissensions in the society, and about matters which, sometimes, were of little consequence except to the individuals immediately concerned, and the unpleasant feelings resulting from the agitation of the subjects of dispute before the whole society as judges, were also causes operating against the increase of the existing denomination, and likely to favour the introduction of any other system that might be less Calvinistic, and the internal concerns of which should be more discreetly managed.

It was a favourable circumstance that the individual who was instrumental to the introduction of Church Services into this Village was a man of "good report," of blameless integrity, of sound judgment, of steady but unobtrusive piety, and universally esteemed for his plain and honest worth as a citizen, a neighbor, and a friend. He lived, therefore, above the suspicion of improper motives; and his example carried with it an influence more steady, and, in the end, more prevailing, than any principle of mere interest or of party strife. He was sincerely attached to The Church, and he believed that her Services would prove to be a general and public benefit to his neighborhood. With this persuasion, and after having several times attended public worship with the congregation at Auburn, he obtained from the clergyman of that place a promise to visit the "Flats."

The Reverend Lucius Smith, Rector of St. Peter's Church, Auburn, and one of the Diocesan Missionaries, made his first visit to Moravia on Monday the 23d of June, 1822. On the evening of that day he officiated and preached in the brick school house; and a second Service was held on the next day, the Feast of St. John Baptist, at the Methodist Chapel in Locke. There Mr. Smith preached and administered the Sacrament of The Lord's Supper to six members of the Church; the following are the names of these first six Communicants: Dudley Loomis, James Masters, Heber Foot, Patrick G. Monaghan, John Locke, and Henry Burdick. The enjoyment of religious privileges after a long season of destitution is frequently attended with the revival of unwonted zeal. The movement which followed in the present instance may have been, in some degree, owing to this awakening of religious affections; but it is presumed that something also is to be ascribed to the warm and enterprising spirit of Mr. Smith. On the very next day, June 25, 1822, a meeting was convened at the house of Mr. Laurence Wormer, in the neighborhood of the Chapel, for the purpose of the organiza-

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tion of a Church Congregation. The Reverend Mr. Smith presided, and it having been resolved to be expedient to organize a Congregation of the Church, a Vestry was chosen to conduct the affairs of the same, which assumed the title of St. Peter's Church, Moravia.

Defective as were these proceedings, in having been held without the Canonical Notice, and in a place distant five miles from the location of the proposed Church, it is, nevertheless, evidence of the earnestness with which they were conducted, that the meeting was not adjourned until the appointment of five persons "as a committee to draft and circulate a subscription for the purpose of building a Church, to be located at the Village of Moravia." The effort did not end with the adoption of resolutions; for, from subscription papers dated two days afterwards, June 27th, it appears that the value of about eight hundred dollars in money and materials for the building "was pledged for the purpose of raising, covering, flooring, and glazing a House of Worship." This sum, considering the means of the subscribers, was certainly liberal. The following were the zealous members of the Committee: Dudley Loomis, John Locke, James Masters, Heber Foot, and Daniel Thorp.

The work of building, however, was not commenced until the following Spring. The frame of the Church was put up about the first of June, 1823, and in the following August the work of covering it was so far advanced that it was occupied by a congregation assembled for public worship, and the Reverend Mr. Smith had the pleasure of conducting the Service.

The work of building was not conducted rapidly to its completion, although the Church is small, being 30 feet front with a depth of 40 feet, and built in the plainest manner, differing from a parallelogram only by the projection in front of a plain tower which rises one section above the roof and is ornamented simply with pilasters, a cornice, and four plain quadrangular pyramids. The pews, the Chancel, and a small gallery over the western door were built in the winter of 1823, and the plastering was finished in the ensuing Autumn. The painting of the interior did not take place until the Summer of 1832.

What Services were performed at Moravia by the Reverend Mr. Smith during the Summer and Autumn of 1822 it does not appear, but from a subscription paper dated the 13th of January, 1823, it is inferred that an arrangement was made during that winter by which the Rector of St. Peter's, Auburn, was to officiate at Moravia one-fourth of the time. This being carried into effect, the Services were conducted in the Village Schoolhouse for several months, the Reverend Burton H. Hickox, Deacon, officiating in the stead of Mr. Smith, who at this time was absent from his parish as an agent to obtain subscriptions for Hobart College at Geneva.

The informality of the organization in Locke was, this year, 1823, superseded by a regular meeting in the Village of Moravia, on the 14th of July, at which the Parish was organized under the title of St. Matthew's Church, and Messrs. Dudley Loomis and Warren Rowley were chosen Church Wardens.

The Reverend Mr. Hickox ceasing to officiate for the Rector of the Church at Auburn, his place was supplied by the Reverend Orsamus H. Smith, who continued to visit Moravia, until, being

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invited to settle there, he, on Advent Sunday, November, 1823, took charge of St. Matthew's Parish as its Rector. The reports of Mr. Smith to the Convention in 1824 and 1825 do not mention the amount of Services rendered at Moravia, but it is believed he officiated there one-half of the time, bestowing the remainder of his services for the benefit of Congregations in the adjacent towns of Tully and Genoa.

Moravia was received into the number of Diocesan Missionary Stations in 1825, and the Reverend Mr. Smith as the Missionary continued to officiate during the three succeeding years, until his removal to Paris, Oneida County, August 1, 1828. It may be mentioned in this connection that the Congregation at Moravia not only received benefit from the pecuniary aid furnished to its Ministers as Diocesan Missionaries, but imparted benefit also as a channel of religious intercourse to the regions beyond it; and thus it stands, a link in the chain of the Church's extension from village to village and from county to county. Twenty years before this a congregation was organized, by a Missionary, at Geneva in the County of Ontario. The Church at Auburn was the fruit of labours of the Missionary from Geneva; a Missionary from Auburn organized the Church at Moravia; and a Missionary from Moravia subsequently one congregation at Homer and another at McLean.

The first visit of the Bishop of the Diocese to the Congregation at Moravia was on the 10th day of September, 1826, on which occasion the Church was solemnly consecrated to the worship of Almighty God, and seventeen persons were confirmed.

After the removal of the Reverend Mr. Smith, in 1828, the Congregation had no regular clerical services for a period of seventeen months. The Church, however, was regularly opened for Divine Service on the Lord's Day, and the services were conducted by the Senior Warden, Mr. Dudley Loomis, acting as Lay Reader. Thus sustained, the Congregation lost scarcely any of the ground which it had gained, but was rather strengthened by new accessions, and that of those who, coming in, not as "summer friends," were more likely to remain in the Church for the sake of its Scriptural Doctrines, its pure and primitive worship, and its Apostolic Order. The example of the Congregation in employing the services of a Lay Reader, rather than close the doors of the Church, cannot be too highly commended. At the same time it is evidence of that rare but genuine piety which values the Services of God's House rather for the worship than the preaching, it is proof that God verifies His promise in sending a blessing upon those who "forsake not the assembling of themselves together."

The Reverend Amos G. Baldwin visited the Church at Moravia in the Summer of 1829, officiated several times, and administered the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. On the 10th of September in the same year the Congregation was visited a second time by the Bishop of the Diocese (the Right Reverend John Henry Hobart), and on this occasion Mr. James Selkregg was admitted to the Holy Order of Deacons, and five persons were confirmed. In January, 1830, the Church obtained the services of the Reverend David Huntington, who remained until the first of May, when he was succeeded by the Reverend Henry Gregory, who remained as

Rector of the Parish until February 11, 1833, when he resigned and removed to the Parish of Homer.*

Reverend Timothy Minor was the next Rector of the Parish; he only remained for a short time. On the 26th day of December, 1830, the vestry called the Reverend Seth W. Beardsley as Rector, who was succeeded in 1840 by the Reverend Beardsley Northrup, who remained until the latter part of the year 1845, when, for a few weeks, the Services were supplied by the Reverend Mr. Eaton. During the incumbency of the Reverend Father Northrup, on the morning following the visitation of the Bishop, May 14, 1842, the Church was burned, nothing being saved from the fire. On the same day, Saturday, May 14th, the Vestry called a meeting of the Congregation and it was decided to immediately rebuild the Church; and for this purpose a committee was appointed to gather funds for the work; a building committee was also appointed at that time. At the same meeting a committee was appointed to request the use of the Moravia Institute as a place in which to hold Services during the building of the new Church; this committee was able to add report to this same meeting before adjournment that they had secured the Institute as requested; and on the next day, being Sunday, the Services of the Church were held, so that the burning of the Church caused no interruption in the work of the Parish. The second Church building was consecrated October 10, 1843. On the 15th day of August, 1845, the Reverend Charles E. Phelps, who died at New Brunswick, N. J., Jan. 19, 1910, was elected Rector of St. Matthew's Parish, and was instituted as such by Bishop DeLancey March 1, 1846. Mr. Phelps remained as Rector for about four years, during which Rectorate the present Church bell was procured, and also a pipe organ. The Reverend George C. Foote supplied Services for a few months in the year 1849, and was succeeded by the Reverend E. W. Hager, Chaplain of Auburn Prison, who supplied Services for about one year, when he was succeeded by the Reverend John Leach, who was Rector of the Parish and also Principal of the Moravia Institute. He was followed in the Rectorship by the Reverend Martin Moody, who was also Principal of the Moravia Institute. The Reverend Edward Pidsley was *Locum Tenens* in 1859 and 1860. The Reverend Charles E. Beardsley became Rector September 20, 1861, and resigned July 1, 1862, owing to illness of a tubercular nature; he continued, however, to officiate until only a few weeks before his death, which occurred in the then Rectory January 11, 1863. During the next eighteen months the Parish was without a Rector. On July 1, 1864, the Reverend Alexander H. Rogers was called to the Rectorate and remained in office till 1867, when he removed to Three Rivers, Michigan; in 1870 he returned to this Parish as its Rector, remaining with the Congregation till the last of the year 1872. During the period between the two Rectorships of the Reverend Father Rogers the Parish was supplied with Services by Otis G. Parker, Hon. S. Edwin Day, and Wing T. Parker acting as Lay Readers, and with occasional Clerical Services by the Reverend Peyton Gallagher and the Reverend B. F. Taylor. The Reverend John B. Calhoun assumed

*The history to this point is from the pen of the Rev. Henry Gregory, who wrote it out in 1836 for Mr. Dudley Loomis, spoken of above.

the Rectorship May 15, 1873, and resigned the same June 14, 1874. He was succeeded immediately by the Reverend E. W. Hager, then a Chaplain in the United States Navy, as *Locum Tenens*; he remained until October, 1874. The next Priest in charge was the Reverend C. Collard Adams, who withdraw from the Parish in May, 1875. On June 1, 1875, the Reverend John A. Bowman became Rector and remained as such until January 1, 1878. In the Fall of 1879 John Henry Hobart DeMille was called as Rector of the Parish, resigning in September, 1881. He was succeeded by the Reverend Joseph Cross, D. D., LL. D., who was Rector until January 1, 1883. The Reverend Charles T. Ogden, of Portland, Maine, was Priest in charge from January 1, 1883, until May 1st of the same year, when he was followed by the Reverend George Bowen, also Priest in charge, who remained until January, 1886. John William Henry Weibel was Rector from January 1, 1886, to November 1, 1888. From the resignation of Father Weibel to September 1, 1890, the Services were in charge of students of St. Andrew's Divinity School of Syracuse. On September 1, 1890, the Reverend A. Mead Burgess became Rector, remaining until October 1, 1892. During his Rectorship fifty-five were Confirmed, the greatest number during any single Rectorate in the history of the Parish. About January 1, 1893, the Reverend James B. Murray, D. D., came to the Parish as its Rector, and remained until November, 1896. On January 1, 1897, the Reverend Mytton Maury, D. D., a Clergyman resident at Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y., being there engaged in revising and editing a text book on geography, was asked to take Sunday duty and supply services in the Parish, and, in accordance with request of the Vestry and on these terms, supplied the Sunday Services until September, 1901. Dr. Maury was never resident in the Parish, only coming to Moravia on Saturday and leaving Monday for his duties at Cornell. Easter Day, 1902, the Reverend Grant Paul Sommerville, D. D., became Rector, and resigned January 1, 1908. On June 26, 1908, the Reverend William Sutherland Stevens, M. A., became Priest in charge, and on October 26th of the same year the Vestry elected him Rector of St. Matthew's Parish.

On October 10, 1897, the Church, which had done good service since 1843, was used as a place of Worship for the last time, and immediately thereafter was taken down to make room for the present Church. This new Church, the third one to be built by the Parish, was consecrated on December 13, 1898, by the Right Reverend Frederick Dan Huntington, Bishop of Central New York.

All three Churches have been built upon the same lot, which was given by the Honourable Rowland Day for that purpose in 1822, he being a member of the first Vestry and continuing in that office until his death in 1843.

The Parish has owned and used in its Services three pipe organs. The first organ, bought in 1832, which was burned in 1842, was built by a blacksmith at Dryden; the second organ, used in the second Church, was bought from Mr. Lucius Smith of Guilford, in 1843; this organ was given to the Church at Smithboro, N. Y., in 1884, at the time that the third organ, which was given to the Parish by the Honourable S. Edwin Day as a memorial to his

son, Harry Day, was installed. This last organ is now in the Church and has proved to be a most excellent instrument.

On October 5, 1908, the Cross, which is of iron and weighs 207 pounds, was erected on the front gable of the Church and blessed to the Greater Glory of Almighty God and in honour of St. Piacidus, on whose Feast Day it was put in position.

The Eucharistic, and the Vesper candlesticks now in the Church, were used for the first time at the Eucharist on St. Luke's Day, October 18, 1908.

The present handsome Church was made possible largely by the generous liberality of the late William Keeler and his son-in-law, the Honourable S. Edwin Day.

St. Matthew's Parish has been especially liberal in furnishing to the Church additions to the ranks of the Clergy, having given thirteen of her sons to the Holy Ministry, as follows: The Reverend Messrs. James Selkregg, Joseph G. Knapp, Spencer M. Rice, Julius Townsend, Smith Townsend, John G. Webster, George W. Dunbar, Fayette Royce, Lyman Phelps, Thomas Bell, Thomas Duck, Robert W. Bowman, and the Right Reverend William Paret, now Bishop of Maryland. Among those who have served the Parish as Lay Reader and have since been Priested we may well mention, for the good work done by him while here, the Reverend William D. Benton, D. D.

In the last sixty-five years the Parish has had but two Choir Masters, Samuel E. Day and his son, the Hon. S. Edwin Day, who still acts in that capacity. Under the direction of these men the music at St. Matthew's Church has always been of an unusually high degree of excellence.

Among the items of interest to be found in the Parish Registers may be mentioned the record of the marriage of the Honourable Millard Fillmore, afterwards President of the United States, to Miss Abigail Powers, in St. Matthew's Church, on Sunday evening, the 1st of February, 1826. The Townsend Brothers and S. M. Rice who were ordained from this Parish were converts from the Methodist Connection, the latter having been pastor of the local society.

The cornerstone now in the foundation of St. Matthew's Church, in the northeast corner, is the same one that was placed in the foundation of the old Church in 1822, and still bears the name of Rowland Day, and the date 1822. The original Certificate of Consecration of the first St. Matthew's Church is also still in existence and on exhibition in the present Church. The first volume of the Parish Register is now in the possession of the present Rector, as is also the original copy of a sermon which was preached in St. Matthew's Church on September 30, 1832, by the then Rector, the Reverend Henry Gregory, D. D.

The *first* Vestry of St. Matthew's Parish was composed of the following men: Dudley Loomis and Warren Rowley, Church Wardens; Rowland Day, David Amable, Gersham Morse, George Ward, Sylvester Olmsted, Chad Southwick, Charles E. Ford and Warren Parsons, Vestrymen.

The present Vestry of St. Matthew's Parish is composed of the following men: Hiram H. Alley and Webb J. Greenfield, Church Wardens; Hon. S. E. Day, W. J. H. Parker, T. A. Hilliard, W. E.

Greenfield, R. A. Harter, C. H. Sperry, R. W. Hawley, Clarence Wilfong, Vestrymen.

This venerable Parish of St. Matthew was founded in Moravia for a very definite purpose and for that alone, not that its members might build three Church buildings, not that they might buy three organs, not that they might purchase a bell, not that they might possess the best choir and produce the best music in town, not that they might delight themselves with the most beautiful and aesthetically satisfying services to be had; but it was founded simply and solely in order that the *pure* Gospel of JESUS CHRIST might be preached, that Almighty God might be worshipped in the way which he appointed, that the Sacraments might be validly administered, and that through the appointed means of Grace as Christ left the same to the Church to be used by her forever, the men and the women of this whole community might be brought to that state of Godly and of Godlike perfection to which it is the bounden duty of every child of man to attain unto at the last. Such was the end and the aim of the Parish at its inception, and such is still its only reason for being; and for this only will it labour through all the coming days. As we look back over the history of this small village Parish which had only six communicants at the first and now after a lapse of nearly ninety years has somewhat less than two hundred on its Communicant roll, as we note its losses and its gains, its discouragements and its victories, we may, perhaps, be saddened by the story; but though rectors may come and go, and administrations change, and the members of the Parish pass on, one by one, to their rest in Paradise, there to await the Judgment Day, yet we cannot but be inspired by the fact that, in spite of all the changes that time can bring, St. Matthew's Parish *will go forever on* with her beneficent mission in the world, inspired by the certainty that, if she but prove true to the Faith as given by her Lord and Head, she shall be victorious at the last, since the gates of Hell can *not* prevail against her.

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